



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Las Cruces Field Office
1800 Marquess
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88005

IN REPLY REFER TO:
1610(030)

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review and comment is the Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Federal fluid minerals leasing and development in Sierra and Otero Counties. This document describes and analyzes alternative plans for managing Federal fluid minerals leasing and subsequent activities in Sierra and Otero Counties, New Mexico.

The purpose of this review is to help BLM in its decision making process. We welcome your comments. Comments on this document may be submitted to this office or presented verbally at the scheduled public hearings. Written comments should be addressed to:

Tom Phillips, RMPA/EIS Team Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Las Cruces Field Office
1800 Marquess
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88005

All written comments must be postmarked no later than February 20, 2001 in order to be considered in the Proposed RMPA/Final EIS. Where possible, include in your comments reference to the pages and paragraphs on which you are commenting.

The public hearings and open houses will be advertised in the local news media. They are scheduled as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Location</u>
Tuesday, January 9, 2001	7:00 p.m.	Roswell	Best Western Sally Port Inn, 2000 N. Main St.
Wednesday, January 10, 2001	7:00 p.m.	Alamogordo	Otero County Courthouse, Commission Chambers, Room 253, 1000 New York Ave.
Thursday, January 11, 2001	7:00 p.m.	T or C	Sierra County Commission Chambers, 100 North Date St.

A time limit for making public comments will be established based on the number of people wishing to make comments at each hearing.

An open house will immediately precede the public hearings, starting at 6 p.m. at the same locations. The open house will have displays providing information to explain the document and the environmental process followed. BLM specialists will be available to discuss the Draft RMPA/EIS.

Written and oral comments will be considered fully and evaluated in preparing the Proposed RMPA/Final EIS. If changes to this Draft document in response to comments are minor, the final document will include only those changes and will not be a full reprint. Therefore, reviewers are urged to retain this copy of the Draft RMPA/EIS to be used with the final document.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amy L. Lueders', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Amy L. Lueders
Field Manager

Enclosure

**RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT/
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
FOR FEDERAL FLUID MINERALS LEASING AND DEVELOPMENT
IN SIERRA AND OTERO COUNTIES**

Draft (X)

Final ()

LEAD AGENCY: U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

TYPE OF ACTION: Administrative

JURISDICTION: Sierra and Otero Counties, New Mexico

ABSTRACT

This Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) describes and analyzes alternative plans for managing Federal fluid minerals leasing and subsequent activities in Sierra and Otero Counties, New Mexico. managing Federal fluid minerals leasing and subsequent activities in Sierra and Otero Counties, New Mexico. Of the nearly 7 million acres of Federal, State, Tribal, and private lands in the two counties, the BLM Las Cruces Field Office administers approximately 1.8 million surface acres and 5 million acres with underlying Federal minerals.

Three alternatives have been considered. The No-action Alternative assumes that the existing management direction would continue. Compliance with laws and regulations would continue on a case-by-case basis. Alternatives A and B address existing legislative and regulatory requirements at a programmatic level, and/or place constraints if resource values are determined to be sufficiently high or protections are justified in the public interest. Decisions and analysis would be tiered from the RMPA/EIS, thereby expediting future NEPA analysis and other legal and regulatory requirements. Alternative A is BLM's preferred alternative, which implements existing laws, thereby protecting the environment to the extent deemed necessary while still meeting BLM's multiple use mandates.

When the RMPA is completed, it will provide a comprehensive framework for managing the BLM-administered public land and resources and for allocating their uses.

Date filed with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: November 9, 2000.

Comments on this Draft RMPA/EIS must be postmarked no later than February 20, 2001.

Comments should be addressed to:

Tom Phillips, RMPA/EIS Team Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Las Cruces Field Office
1800 Marquess
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88005



Recommended by: _____
Las Cruces Field Manager

Approved by: _____
New Mexico State Director

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	ix
Summary	S-1
Introduction	S-1
Alternatives	S-2
Affected Environment	S-3
Environmental Consequences	S-3
Consultation and Coordination	S-6
Chapter 1 - Introduction	1-1
1.1 Purpose and Need	1-1
1.2 Location	1-3
1.3 Planning Process for the RMPA/EIS	1-4
1.3.1 Step 1- Identification of Issues	1-4
1.3.2 Step 2 - Development of Planning Criteria	1-6
1.3.3 Step 3 - Data and Information Collection	1-6
1.3.4 Step 4 - Management Situation Analysis	1-7
1.3.5 Step 5 - Formulation of Alternatives	1-7
1.3.6 Step 6 - Estimation of Effects of Alternatives	1-8
1.3.7 Step 7 - Selection of the Preferred Alternative	1-8
1.3.8 Step 8 - Selection of the Plan Amendment	1-8
1.3.9 Step 9 - Monitoring and Evaluation	1-8
1.4 Relationship to BLM Policies, Plans, and Programs	1-9
Chapter 2 - Alternatives	2-1
2.1 Introduction	2-1
2.2 Continuing Management Guidance and Actions	2-1
2.2.1 Lands and Access	2-1
2.2.2 Minerals	2-4
2.2.3 Soils	2-4
2.2.4 Water Resources	2-5
2.2.5 Air Quality and Meteorology	2-8
2.2.6 Noise	2-8
2.2.7 Vegetation	2-10
2.2.8 Wildlife and Fisheries	2-10
2.2.9 Special Status Species	2-12
2.2.10 Rangeland	2-13
2.2.11 Cultural Resources	2-14
2.2.12 Paleontological Resources	2-15
2.2.13 Recreation	2-16

2.2.14 Visual Resources	2-16
2.2.15 Special Management Areas	2-18
2.2.16 Fire Management	2-19
2.2.17 Hazardous Materials	2-19
2.3 Alternatives	2-20
2.3.1 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Further Analysis	2-20
2.3.2 Plan Alternatives Considered	2-21
2.4 Comparison of Alternatives	2-27
Chapter 3 - Affected Environment	3-1
3.1 Introduction	3-1
3.2 Physiography and Topography	3-2
3.3 Climate and Meteorology	3-2
3.4 Lands and Access	3-3
3.4.1 Jurisdiction/Surface Ownership	3-3
3.4.2 Existing Land Uses	3-4
3.4.3 Future Land Use	3-6
3.4.4 Utilities and Rights-of-way	3-7
3.4.5 Access and Transportation	3-7
3.5 Geology and Minerals	3-9
3.5.1 Tectonics and Structural Regime	3-9
3.5.2 Stratigraphy	3-10
3.5.3 Leasable Minerals	3-10
3.5.4 Locatable Minerals	3-13
3.5.5 Saleable Minerals	3-13
3.6 Soils	3-14
3.6.1 Soil Erosion	3-15
3.6.2 Prime Farmland	3-16
3.7 Water Resources	3-16
3.7.1 Groundwater	3-16
3.7.2 Surface Water	3-19
3.8 Air Quality	3-20
3.9 Noise	3-21
3.9.1 Existing Noise Environment	3-22
3.10 Vegetation	3-22
3.10.1 Grasslands	3-24
3.10.2 Woodland/Forest	3-24
3.10.3 Riparian/Other Wetlands/Playas	3-25
3.10.4 Noxious Weeds	3-25
3.11 Wildlife	3-26
3.11.1 Standard Habitat Types	3-26
3.11.2 Wildlife	3-27

3.12	Special Status Species	3-30
3.12.1	Special Status Species Habitats	3-30
3.12.2	Endemic Species	3-31
3.12.3	Nominated ACECs	3-32
3.13	Rangeland	3-32
3.14	Cultural Resources	3-33
3.14.1	Cultural History	3-33
3.14.2	Archaeological and Historical Sites	3-35
3.14.3	Traditional Cultural Places and Lifeway Values	3-37
3.15	Paleontological Resources	3-38
3.16	Recreation	3-40
3.16.1	Recreation Sites	3-39
3.16.2	Off-Road Vehicle Use	3-40
3.17	Visual Resources	3-40
3.17.1	Landscape Character	3-41
3.17.2	Scenic Quality	3-41
3.17.3	Sensitive Viewpoints	3-42
3.17.4	Distance Zones	3-42
3.17.5	VRM Classes in Context of BLM's Decision Area	3-42
3.18	Special Management Areas	3-43
3.18.1	Wilderness Study Areas	3-43
3.18.2	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	3-44
3.18.3	Nominated ACECs	3-44
3.18.4	McGregor Range	3-45
3.19	Social and Economic Conditions	3-45
3.19.1	Demographics	3-46
3.19.2	Housing	3-47
3.19.3	Economic Activity	3-48
3.19.4	Fiscal	3-51
3.19.5	Values, Beliefs, and Attitudes	3-51
Chapter 4	Environmental Consequences	4-1
4.1	Introduction	4-1
4.1.1	Impact Types	4-2
4.1.2	Reasonable Foreseeable Development	4-2
4.1.3	Mitigation Planning	4-5
4.2	Impacts Common to All Alternatives	4-5
4.2.1	Lands and Access	4-5
4.2.2	Minerals	4-9
4.2.3	Soils	4-11
4.2.4	Water Resources	4-14
4.2.5	Air Quality	4-23

4.2.6	Noise	4-28
4.2.7	Vegetation	4-32
4.2.8	Wildlife	4-33
4.2.9	Special Status Species	4-40
4.2.10	Rangeland	4-44
4.2.11	Cultural Resources	4-45
4.2.12	Paleontological Resources	4-48
4.2.13	Recreation	4-49
4.2.14	Visual Resources	4-50
4.2.15	Special Management Areas	4-53
4.2.16	Social and Economic Conditions	4-53
4.3	Alternatives	4-66
4.3.1	Oil and Gas Resources	4-66
4.3.2	Geothermal Resources	4-102
4.4	Cumulative Effects	4-107
Chapter 5	Chapter 5 - Consultation and Coordination	5-1
5.1	Introduction	5-1
5.2	Agency Consultation	5-1
5.3	Consistency with Other Plans	5-2
5.4	Public Participation	5-3
5.4.1	Identification of Issues	5-3
5.4.2	Other Public Participation	5-4
5.4.3	Public Review of the Draft RMPA/EIS	5-4
5.4.4	Public Hearing	5-5
5.4.5	Proposed RMPA/Final EIS	5-5
5.5	Distribution of the Draft RMPA/EIS	5-6
5.6	List of Preparers and Reviewers	5-9
Map Users' Guide	Map Users' Guide	MUG-1
Appendices		
A	A - Federal Fluid Minerals Leasing Information	
A-I	Acts of Authority and Mandates for the Bureau of Land Management	A-I-1
A-II	Lease Issuing Process	A-II-1
A-III	Surface Use and Best Management Practices	A-III-1
A-IV	Reasonable Foreseeable Development	A-IV-1
A-V	Plan Alternatives Considered	A-V-1
A-VI	Stipulation Forms	A-VI-1

B - Standard Operating Procedures for Exploration, Development, Production, and Abandonment	
B-I Oil and Gas	B-I-1
B-II Geothermal	B-II-1
C - Summary of Declared and Undeclared Underground Basins	C-1
D - Special Status Species	
D-I Special Status Species Potentially Present in the Planning and Decision Areas	D-I-1
D-II Special Status Species Accounts	D-II-1
D-III Special Status Species Likely to Occur in BLM's Decision Area and Associated Habitats	D-III-1
D-IV Agency Correspondence	D-IV-1
Glossary	G-1
References	R-1
Index	I-1

LIST OF TABLES

S-1 Summary of Leasing Constraints in Decision Area by Alternative	S-7
S-2 Summary of Potential Impacts by Alternative	S-11
1-1 Issues Identified Through the Scoping Process	1-5
2-1 Watershed Areas	2-5
2-2 Yearly Average Equivalent Sound Levels Identified as Requisite to Protect the Public Health and Welfare with an Adequate Margin of Safety	2-9
2-3 Existing Wildlife Management Direction	2-11
2-4 Cultural Resource Decisions	2-15
2-5 ORV Limited and Closed Areas	2-17
2-6 Nominated ACECs	2-19
2-7 Geographic Areas with Multiple Resource Concerns	2-23
2-8 Summary of Leasing Constraints in Decision Area by Alternative	2-32
2-9 Plan Alternatives Considered	2-35
2-10 Management Guidance in Decision Area by Alternative	2-29
3-1 Land Status in Acres	3-5
3-2 Average Daily Traffic Volumes	3-8

3-3	Accident Totals by Year	3-9
3-4	Federal and State Highway Accident Totals by Roadway Segment and Year	3-9
3-5	Sound Levels of Typical Noise Sources and Noise Environments	3-23
3-6	Habitat Types in Sierra and Otero Counties	3-27
3-7	Rangeland Production Classes and Acreages	3-32
3-8	Geologic Time Line	3-39
3-9	Selected Demographic Information	3-46
3-10	Population Projections	3-46
3-11	Housing Characteristics	3-48
3-12	Employment Characteristics	3-49
3-13	Economic Activity on Public Land	3-50
4-1	Twenty-year Projection for Oil and Gas Development	4-3
4-2	Split Estate by Hydrologic Basin	4-7
4-3	Trips Generated During Well Development	4-8
4-4	Total Trips Generated by RFD	4-9
4-5	Noise Levels Associated with Oil and Gas Activity	4-29
4-6	Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Impact Analysis - Exploration and Development Phase	4-58
4-7	Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Impact Analysis - Production Phase	4-62
4-8	No-action Alternative—Constraints in Decision Area By Basin	4-67
4-9	Alternative A—Constraints in Decision Area By Basin	4-82
4-10	Alternative B—Constraints in Decision Area By Basin	4-94
4-11	Estimated Surface-Disturbing Actions Per Year	4-110
5-1	Public Scoping Meeting Attendance and Comments	5-4
5-2	List of Document Recipients	5-6
5-3	List of Preparers and Reviewers	5-9
A-1	Major Federal, State, and County Authorizing Actions	A-I-9
A-2	Inventory of Petroleum Wells Drilled in Sierra and Otero Counties, New Mexico	A-IV-2
A-3	Oil and Gas Wildcat Wells by County	A-IV-6
A-4	Summary of Highly Potential Wells	A-IV-7
A-5	Existing Fluid Mineral Leases	A-IV-8
A-6	Twenty-Year Projection for Oil and Gas Development	A-IV-12
A-7	Twenty-Year Projection for Geothermal Development	A-IV-14
A-8	Plan Alternatives Considered	A-V-5
A-9	Resource Concerns by Type of Restriction	A-VI-1

LIST OF FIGURES

2-1	Management Guidance in Decision Area by Alternative	2-28
4-1	Typical Construction Equipment Noise Generation Levels	4-30
B-1	Gravity Meter Survey Principles	B-I-4
B-2	Principles of Seismic Reflection Survey	B-I-6
B-3	Typical Rotary Drilling	B-I-13
B-4	Typical Flowing Well	B-I-23

LIST OF MAPS*

1-1	RMPA Planning Area	1-2
2-1	No-action Alternative (Existing Management)	*
2-2	Alternative A	*
2-3	Alternative B	*
3-1	Jurisdiction and Federal Fluid Minerals	*
3-2	Lands and Access	*
3-3	Potential for Oil and Gas Resources	*
3-4	Potential for Geothermal Resources	*
3-5	Highly Erosive and Fragile Soils, Prime Farmland, and Watershed Areas	*
3-6	Water Resources	*
3-7	Major Vegetation and Habitat Types	*
3-8	Special Status Species	*
3-9	Visual Resources	*
3-10	Recreation and Special Management Areas	*

*Note: All maps for Chapters 2 and 3 are located in the map section (following Chapter 5).

The large-scale maps listed below accompany the text of the Management Situation Analysis and are on file at the Las Cruces Office of the Bureau of Land Management.

- MSA 1 Planning Area
- MSA 2 Jurisdiction
- MSA 3 Lands and Access
- MSA 4 Tectonic Features

MSA 5	Geology
MSA 6	Potential for Oil and Gas Resources
MSA 7	Potential for Geothermal Resources
MSA 8	Generalized Soil Map Units
MSA 9	Generalized Erosive Soils
MSA 10	Generalized Soil Map Units Supporting Prime Farmland
MSA 11	Depth to Groundwater
MSA 12	Distribution of Dissolved Solids in Groundwater
MSA 13	Distribution of Dominant Chemical Type in Groundwater
MSA 14	Surface Water Resources
MSA 15	Major Vegetation and Wildlife Habitats
MSA 16	Special Status Species Locations and Habitats
MSA 17	Extent of Cultural Resources Inventories
MSA 18	Distribution of Recorded Cultural Resources
MSA 19	Recreation
MSA 20	Visual Resource Management Objectives
MSA 21	Fire Management

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
AD	anno Domini
ADT	average daily traffic
APD	Application for a Permit to Drill
Bbl	per barrel
BC	before Christ
bcf	billion cubic feet
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP	best management practice
BOP	blowout preventer
C	Celsius
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CO ₂	carbon dioxide
COA	conditions of approval
CRMP	Cultural Resource Management Plan
CSU	controlled surface use
CUA	common use area
dB	decibels
dBA	A-weighted sound level
DST	drill stem test
EIS	environmental impact statement
EO	Executive Order
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
EPCRA	Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act
F	Fahrenheit
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
ft ² /day	square feet per day
FWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
GIS	geographic information systems
HMP	Habitat Management Plan

hp	horsepower
H ₂ S	hydrogen sulfide
IHICS	Integrated Habitat Inventory and Classification System
I-25	Interstate 25
KGRA	known geothermal resource area
Ldn	day-night noise level
Leq	equivalent sound level
Leq(h)	one-hour equivalent sound level
Fg/m	micrograms per cubic meter
mg/L	milligrams per liter
MCF	thousand cubic feet
MCFD	thousand cubic feet per day
MMCFD	million cubic feet per day
mph	miles per hour
MS	manual section
MSA	Management Situation Analysis
NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NIA	Notice of Intent to Abandon
NMCRIS	New Mexico Cultural Resource Information System
NMDGF	New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
NMOGD	New Mexico Oil and Gas Division
NMED	New Mexico Environment Department
NMPM	New Mexico Prime Meridian
NMSU	New Mexico State University
NMTSD	New Mexico Traffic Safety Department
NMWQCC	New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission
NOI	Notice of Intent
NO ₂	nitrogen dioxide
NO _x	nitrogen oxide
NOS	Notice of Staking
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NPS	National Park Service
NRCS	Natural Resource Conservation Service
NSO	no surface occupancy
NTL	Notice to Lessees

OHV	off-highway vehicle
ORV	off-road vehicle
PAC	primary activity centers
PILT	payment in-lieu of taxes
PL	Public Law
PLO	Public Land Order
PM ₁₀	particulate matter of 10 microns or less
ppm	parts per million
PSD	Prevention of Significant Deterioration
PVC	polyvinyl chloride
R&PP	Recreation and Public Purpose
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
RFD	reasonable foreseeable development
RMP	Resource Management Plan
RMPA	Resource Management Plan Amendment
ROD	Record of Decision
ROS	Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
SEO	State Engineer's Office
SHS	standard habitat site
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SLTC	standard lease terms and conditions
SO _x	sulfur oxide
SO ₂	sulfur dioxide
SPCC	spill prevention, control, and countermeasure
SR	State Route
SS	special status
SSS	special status species
STATSGO	State Soil Geographic (Database)
SUPO	Surface Use Plan of Operation
T&E	threatened and endangered
TDS	Total Dissolved Solids
TL	timing limitation
TSCA	Toxic Substances Control Act
TSP	total suspended particulates
UIC	underground injection control
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey

VMT	vehicle miles traveled
VRM	Visual Resource Management
WQA	New Mexico Water Quality Act
WSA	Wilderness Study Area